

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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COLORADO MAN INDICTED FOR WILDLIFE VIOLATIONS

An Aguilar, Colorado, man has been charged with violating the trade embargo against Rhodesia, receiving illegally imported wild birds, and interstate transportation of 120 bird skins which may have been stolen from the University of Michigan.

Bill Lee Huffman, a former Michigan taxidermist, was indicted July 26 by a Federal Grand Jury in Detroit, Michigan. He faces possible maximum fines of \$48,000 and 43 years in prison. No trial date has been set.

The eight-count indictment resulted as an offshoot of a 10-month undercover investigation by special agents of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The investigation uncovered a lucrative taxidermy operation at a Michigan jewelry store involving the possession and sale of hundreds of protected native and foreign birds. In a May 7 raid on the Gold Anvil jewelry store, located in the Detroit suburb of Franklin, Service agents seized 250 birds, arrested two men, and discovered information pointing to Hoffman.

Fish and Wildlife Service agents served a search warrant May 9 on Huffman at his Colorado home and seized 250 birds that were part of his collection of 800 mounted birds. The U.S. Customs Service and the FBI joined the case at this point to investigate the activities involving Rhodesia, illegal importation, and interstate transportation of stolen property.

Huffman was indicted on one count each of promoting the exportation of goods from Rhodesia and of importing 130 bird skins from that country, both in violation of a May 29, 1968, Presidential Executive Order prohibiting trade with Rhodesia. Each count could carry a maximum fine of \$10,000 and 10 years in prison. The 130 bird skins from Rhodesia included rare exotic species such as the kingfisher, plovers crane, Martial eagle, horn-bill, the red billed wood hoo poe, black collared barbet, and the arrow marked babbler. Huffman also was indicted on one count of receiving and concealing birds that were illegally imported into the United States, a count which carries a maximum fine of \$10,000 and up to 5 years in prison. He was further charged with four counts of unlawful trade in migratory birds and violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, a Federal law protecting most migratory wild birds in the United States. Each of these counts could bring a \$2,000 fine and a prison sentence of up to 2 years.

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